

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5106

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to grizzly bear management.

Brief Description: Providing for grizzly bear management.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Owen, Drew, Sellar, Hochstatter, Fraser, Newhouse, Prince, Haugen and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/28/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Cairnes; Elliot; G. Fisher; Romero; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Jacobsen.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The grizzly bear was listed as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1975. The first recovery plan for the bear was completed in 1982. That plan established four areas as recovery areas (Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, and Selkirk). Two additional areas (North Cascades and Bitterroot) were to be evaluated to determine if they could support grizzly bear populations. The overall recovery plan is coordinated by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, which is comprised of representatives of several federal agencies as well as representatives from state wildlife agencies in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Washington and Canadian management authorities.

The assessment of the North Cascades area indicated that the area could support a viable grizzly bear population. An inter-agency group has since been working on a draft recovery plan for this area. One of the recovery actions recommended in the

draft plan is to initiate the National Environmental Policy Act review process to evaluate the placement of less than 10 grizzly bears into the North Cascades area.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Fish and Wildlife shall protect grizzly bears and develop management programs on publicly owned lands to encourage natural regeneration of the bears in areas with suitable habitat. Grizzly bears are not to be transplanted or introduced into the state. The department is to participate fully in all discussions and negotiations with federal and state agencies relating to grizzly bear management and is to communicate, support and implement the policy expressed in this legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: We do have grizzly bears in the state in the Selkirk area. This bill will allow for their protection and management. There is some question about the bears being in the North Cascades. We don't want troublesome bears introduced. Importing bears into the North Cascades would impact Okanogan County. The chief concern is the impact on cattle and calves. If it is such prime habitat, the bears would have moved there. This will help manage risk for recreational users. There is a risk of success too; look at the mountain goats in Olympic National Park. It is hard to enforce keeping people out of wilderness areas. In other recovery areas, the Forest Service requires campers to use specialized gear.

Testimony Against: An unresolved question is whether the federal government would remove funding from the department.

Testified: Senator Bob Morton, prime sponsor; Kent Lebsack, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Rich Wagner and Ken Parrish, Backcounty Horsemen; Lothar Pinkers, Washington State Horse Council; K.O. Rosenberg, Northeast Tri-Counties; John Kelly, King County Outdoor Sports Council (all in favor); and Ed Manary, Department of Fish and Wildlife.